

ACC CENT

p.5

ENDURING CONNECTIONS

Avila's Tradition of Mentorship Inspires
Beyond the Classroom

p.7: Remembering Dr. C. Larry Garrison Sullivan



Avila University's Alumni Magazine
SPRING 2019

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DEAR ALUMNI & FRIENDS,

Where would you and I be today without mentorship? I am lucky to have had great mentors throughout my life that were present, careful listeners, and patient guides. At Avila, we are blessed with excellent faculty, staff, and alumni mentors who do the same for our students.

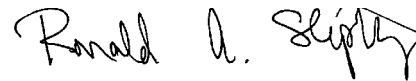
Our classrooms are full of mentoring leaders. Avila faculty expose our students to a breadth of values, show them diversity and its expression, help them understand the demands of their profession, and lead others. They show them how to frame or reframe a vision to align with an organization's mission, and be strong contributors to that mission. This mentorship prepares them to become a citizen of this increasingly-complicated world. You'll read in this issue the stories of just a few faculty who have made enormous, lasting impacts in the lives of our students.

We would not be fulfilling our mission if we were not preparing students to be difference makers, grounded in their faith, and committed to serving their community. The inspiration of the Sisters of St. Joseph is the bedrock of our University. The Sisters center us, and bring us back to the heart of why we're all here: to prepare lifelong learners who make meaningful contributions to the global community.

In fact, the value of this mentorship tradition bears fruit in the fantastic work our alumni do in their communities. I am so proud our graduates have internalized the mission of serving the dear neighbor and taken it out into the world. I regularly hear inspiring stories about Avila graduates giving themselves to their communities. And often at the conclusion of their story, they tell me about an Avila professor or CSJ who set an example of how to act selflessly, providing them help when they needed it most.

So I'll ask again: where would you be without the mentorship you received at Avila? Developing right relationships and serving the dear neighbor are at the heart of our mentoring and I believe that is the Avila difference. It has been for over 100 years and it always will be.

Gratefully,



Ronald A. Slepitza, Ph.D., CSJA
President



Developing right relationships and serving the dear neighbor are at the heart of our mentoring and I believe that is the Avila difference.





Nearly 40 graduating seniors were recognized for their outstanding work in the classroom during Avila's 33rd Annual Honors Ceremony on April 27.



I admire the mission of the University, specifically its diversity and the opportunities it provides to groups underrepresented in higher education.

Avila Welcomes New Vice President

Timothy Klocko, MBA, CPA, joined Avila University as vice president for finance and administration this May, bringing more than 30 years of leadership in higher education, including extensive experience overseeing finance, accounting, business operations, strategic budgeting and planning, facilities, campus safety, human resources, and auxiliary enterprises.

"I admire the mission of the University, specifically its diversity and the opportunities it provides to groups underrepresented in higher education," Klocko said. "I hope my varied background and extensive experience will be beneficial to Avila."

Klocko joins Avila after serving as vice president for finance and administration at Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri. In two tenures at Stephens, he streamlined financial management systems and established a data-driven approach to financial well-being.

Between his appointments at Stephens, Klocko served in a vice president role at Sweet Briar College of Sweet Briar, Virginia and Thomas University in Thomasville, Georgia. In the former, he served as part of the first administration after Sweet Briar's restoration, working with partners to quickly create a strategic, sustainable plan for the college. Prior to serving in administrative roles, he taught accounting.

"We're very pleased to welcome Tim to Avila in this important role," said Avila President Ron Slepitz, Ph.D., CSJA. "In a rapidly changing higher education economy, his experience navigating tricky financial situations for numerous institutions will put Avila in a position of preparedness and strength for years to come."

Avila Retains 91% of First-Year Students

Retention rates are one way a university measures institutional and student success. This year's cohort, the first to enter the University under the Avila Promise, are continuing their studies, fall-to-spring, in overwhelming fashion. Over 91 percent of enrolled fall students returned this spring, exceeding the University's retention goal.

"Retention has always been a priority of our faculty and staff," said Darby Gough, vice president of student development and success. "But this year, to better serve our students, the Student Success Center has implemented two new management systems to track students' progress and ensure that they are meeting their goals in and out of the classroom."

According to Gough, both tools allow the staff to monitor if students are at risk of falling behind, while also giving insight into the challenges students face. Avila's efforts this year have produced a three percent retention increase over last year and the highest fall-to-spring retention rate in eight years.



First-Year Student Reflections

Inspired by this year's Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture Series speaker

William Kamkwamba, the 2018 First-Year Experience focused on sustainability and humankind's environmental impact. The common reading program centered on Kamkwamba's book, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*. An autobiographical account of his childhood in Malawi, Kamkwamba wrote about his creation of non-traditional power sources to generate electricity for his family.

Below are a handful of lessons that Avila first-year students learned from Kamkwamba's story:

Little tasks may not seem like they have an impact on our environment, but they do. Environmental sustainability is not something that you are going to see change right away. It takes time, and it takes enough people with the same mindset to want to improve our world.

— Nia, Kansas City, Missouri, Criminology and Justice Studies

The Earth ... also belongs to the animals that we have here, so we need to be considerate with our actions. There are many ways to be sustainable, but I think the easiest way to get into it is to take one step at a time. Start small and end with something that could potentially change the world.

— Allissa, Independence, Missouri, Accounting

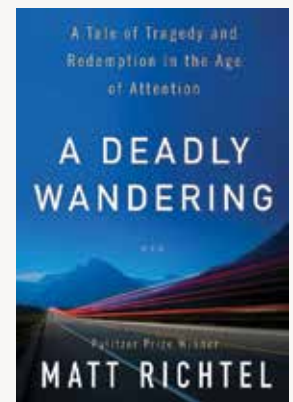
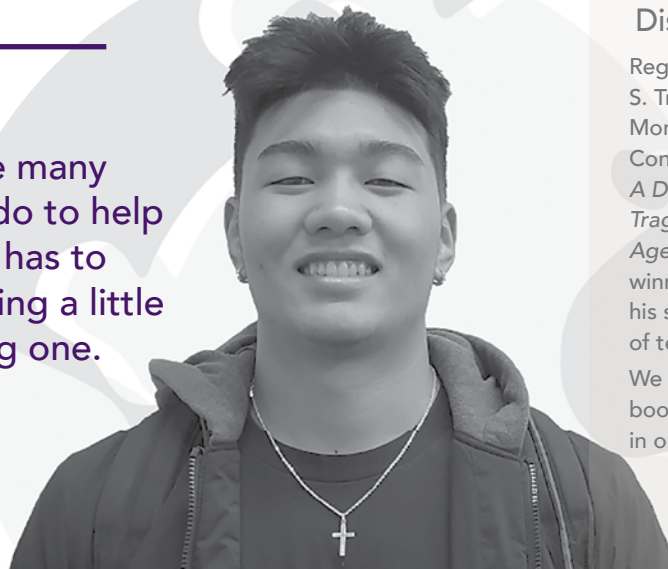
This experience with sustainability that I gained from First-Year Seminar has already impacted my life. I am now recycling daily when I never actively participated in recycling before I came to Avila. I am sure that I will continue these practices of sustainability even after I leave Avila. 🌱

— Mallory, Harrisonville, Missouri, Kinesiology



I have learned there are many things one person can do to help the problem; there just has to be enough people making a little difference to make a big one.

Kaysen, Kapolei, Hawaii



Save the Date: October 14

2019 Harry S. Truman
Distinguished Lecture Series

Reggie Shaw will be the 2019 Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecturer on Monday, October 14 in the Whitfield Conference Center. The subject of *A Deadly Wandering: A Tale of Tragedy and Redemption in the Age of Attention* by Pulitzer Prize-winner Matt Richtel, Shaw will share his story and speak on the dangers of texting and driving.

We encourage you to select this book for your book club and join in on October 14! 🌱

Distinguished Service

Avila Names Six Professor Emeriti



CAROL COBURN, Ph.D., CSJA - 29 YEARS

During her long tenure at Avila, Carol Coburn, Ph.D. brought considerable academic rigor to the classroom and to her research of American religious history and women's studies. She taught several courses, reshaping the format to best serve the student by keeping them relevant and cutting edge. Her reputation

as a scholar is borne out by her published works being cited and used by the Smithsonian Museum and numerous documentary filmmakers. She led the launch of the Martha Smith, CSJ, Ph.D., Archive and Research Center and co-founding the Women Religious Special Collection in the Avila Archive. Awarded the Avila Medal of Honor in 2006, she was named one of the 100 Notables from Avila's first 100 years. Coburn will continue to be a presence on campus as she remains the first director of the CSJ Center for Heritage, Spirituality, and Service at Avila.



GREG FITCH, Ph.D. - 22 YEARS

During his time at Avila, Greg Fitch, Ph.D., has been an admired biology professor and active member of the faculty since 1997. As professor of biology, he taught and mentored biology and pre-health majors, and his talent in the classroom earned him Professor of the Year in 2004 and 2014 from the student

body. A researcher of neurobiology and invertebrate behavior, Fitch was awarded the Avila Distinguished Scholar Award and served on the editorial board of Bioscene, a peer-reviewed journal where he was a regular contributor.



JUDY GIBBS, J.D. - 34 YEARS

An expert in the field of employment law, Judy Gibbs, J.D., has served as a full-time faculty member at Avila since 1985. Her innovative teaching has guided students in business law, as well as business legislation in the school's MBA program. Her expertise has been sought on international employment

law issues, including those from the European Union, China, Africa, and select Pacific Rim countries. In addition to her teaching duties, Gibbs served as the assistant department chair and acting chair for business and economics. She continues to research business and community collaborations to prevent and respond to elder abuse and exploitation.



DOTTY HAMILTON, Ph.D. - 26 YEARS

A forward-thinking and driven educator, Dotty Hamilton, Ph.D., is an Avila Medal of Honor winner who helped grow the School of Visual Arts and Communication (VisCom) as a professor and, for eleven years, dean. In the classroom, Hamilton sought to keep her students on the cutting edge of their studies.

She developed an online portfolio format still in use by graduating seniors, provided real-world experience through internship possibilities, and helped develop interdisciplinary studies courses. Hamilton's service to VisCom was recognized by the creation of the Dr. Dotty Hamilton Women in Media Award.



KRISTI LITTLETON '95, MSE - 19 YEARS

A warm and engaged educator, Kristi Littleton, MSE, helped guide radiology students at Avila University for 19 years. As an active member of the Missouri Society of Radiologic Technologists, Littleton has ensured that Avila students remain at the forefront of developing trends in the field.

In addition to her radiology courses, she taught a section of First-Year Seminar for the past 16 years, welcoming new Avila students and guiding them in their first year. Littleton is also an active community member, active with the Southwood United Church of Christ in Raytown, Missouri and working to establish a Kansas City Chapter of Suicide Awareness Voices for Education.



C. LARRY GARRISON SULLIVAN, Ph.D. - 46 YEARS

One of Avila's longest-serving and most beloved professors, the contributions of the late Larry Garrison Sullivan, Ph.D. will not be forgotten (more on page 7). Beginning his career teaching chemistry in 1973, he became dean of the College of Science and Health

while continuing to teach introductory courses for students interested in health care careers. Sullivan's mentorship could be seen through many generations of Avila students. He counseled dozens of students in pre-health curriculum and advised the Avila pre-health professional honor society chapter. As a campus leader, Sullivan served on many committees, including the Academic Advising Council, Academic Affairs Council, Deans Council, and others. Well-respected by the research community, he also was active in many local, regional and national scientific societies. An Avila Medal of Honor recipient, he was named one of 100 notable people from Avila's first 100 years in 2016.

ENDURING CONNECTIONS

Inspired through mentorship, Avila's 102nd graduating class embrace their professors at the close of commencement.



I have heard umpteen stories of faculty going out of their way to help a student succeed. That care and understanding from our mentors is what makes the Avila community so special.

Marie Joan Harris, CSJ, Ph.D., provost emerita, Avila University





Dr. Sullivan's confidence in me made up for the lack of confidence I had in myself. His readiness to help and to always be available is what I needed.

Tasneem Bader-Omarali, '88 M.D.



Avila

mentors make an impact that lasts a lifetime. From the moment a student takes their first steps on campus, faculty and staff see their worth, dignity, and potential. This value is ingrained in the student experience, from convocate to commencement, through mentorship.

TASNEEM BADER-OMARALI, '88 MD

visited Avila's campus having only been in the United States for a few months. She emigrated from Pakistan in early 1984 and was considering where she wanted to continue her studies. Interested in a career in medicine, she met with Larry Garrison Sullivan, Ph.D., the late professor of chemistry and dean of the College of Science and Health. It was a meeting that changed her life.

"I was on the edge of my seat when I met Dr. Sullivan," she said. "I asked him what chance I had to get into the highly-competitive field of medicine. He read through my transcript and letter of recommendation, took off his glasses and looked me in the eye. He told me, 'Tassie, you have done more chemistry than anyone else in our freshman class, so if there is someone who can do it, it is you.'"

Bader-Omarali excelled in the classroom, earning entrance into the University of Missouri Medical School. The guidance of Sullivan and her other Avila professors allowed her to overcome the challenging coursework and, "made (the subject matter) easy and real."

"Dr. Sullivan's confidence in me made up for the lack of confidence I had in myself," she said. "His readiness to help and to always be available is what I needed. I evolved, grew, and learned so much in my four years at Avila thanks to the rigorous academic requirements that he guided me through."

It is through a diverse set of experiences that our students develop as a whole person. Many colleges boast small classroom sizes and excellent faculty. But for provost emerita Marie Joan Harris, CSJ, Ph.D., Avila is special because it actively develops its campus community. "Ever since I was on staff, Avila sought to hire faculty who had a strong commitment to their students," she said. "Of course they needed to be excellent educators with great scholarship, but they needed to also have that component of being able to spend time with the student."

This focus on mentorship and the values passed down from the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet is the Avila difference:

"Serving the dear neighbor, having right relationships, the development of the whole person; those values stand out and say, 'This is who an Avila student is,'" she said.

JERRY MAÑAN '19

led a decorated career on the stage of Avila's Goppert Theatre. His most recent honor came from the American Collegiate Theatre Festival, which recognized him as one of the top actors at its 2019 regional festival this January. Since recently graduating, Mañan is preparing to take the lessons he learned at Avila into his career.

"I've been able to develop as an actor in ways I wouldn't have anticipated because of my professors at Avila," he said. "The professor who recruited me retired after my junior year, which was a challenge. But he reassured me it was going to be a good thing. He explained that by working with another teacher with a different perspective, I would have to adjust and grow. That challenge has made me a better actor."

Because his professors took the time to know the whole person, they were able to provide the feedback Mañan needed to improve as an actor. That care allowed him to build strong, trusting relationships with his teachers.

"The cool thing about all the professors I've had at Avila is that there is a connection," he said. "I've had three different acting coaches and each



Senior Jerry Mañan on stage in *Much Ado About Nothing*



C. Larry Garrison Sullivan, Ph.D. 1944 - 2019

Avila University mourns the loss of C. Larry Garrison Sullivan, Ph.D. a dedicated instructor, leader, mentor, and friend to the Avila community. As professor of chemistry and dean of the College of Science and Health, his commitment to Avila made its science and health programs highly-regarded and its graduates highly sought after for nearly half a century.

A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, Garrison Sullivan received his Ph.D. in physical chemistry from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. He was active in numerous professional associations, including serving as past president of the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions. He received the Father Joseph L. Walter Awards and the Carol Bafee-Dugan Awards for his contribution to the advising community, and the Avila Medal of Honor for his dedication to the University and its mission. Held in high esteem by his peers across the country, Garrison Sullivan won many awards from national health organizations and represented Avila University with pride.

He will be remembered with much joy for his many gifts of wisdom, insight, and inspiration. His loss leaves a hole in the Avila community. Through the lives of the students, faculty, colleagues, and friends, along with the C. Larry Garrison Sullivan, Ph.D. Scholarship Fund, Garrison Sullivan will not be forgotten at Avila University, nor far beyond. 🕊

of them has helped me grow because I have trusted their knowledge and their mentorship.”

And as our graduates leave campus, they share Avila values with their communities through their gifts, skills, and service. That is the true power of Avila mentors.

“A lot of colleges and universities talk about small communities and small classes, but I think it goes beyond that at Avila,” Harris said. “At Avila, there is an active effort to develop a community which depends on people caring for people. Over the years, I have heard umpteen stories of faculty going out of their way to help a student succeed. That care and understanding from our mentors is what makes the Avila community so special.” 🕊

Faculty News



Carol Coburn, Ph.D., professor of religious studies and women's and gender studies and the director of the CSJ Heritage Center, and **Ken Parsons, Ph.D.**, associate professor of philosophy and director of the Center for Global Studies & Social Justice, observed the five-day "CSJ Cultural Diversity & Conflict Management" curriculum workshop in January. Three Haitian sisters who trained in Le Puy, France in conflict resolution with the Sisters of St. Joseph, taught the workshop to 37 participants from several different religious orders. Coburn and Parsons are designers and evaluators for the international curriculum project.



Nicole Esquibel, MFA, associate professor of communication, screened her latest documentary *Neva Romero: Jamas Olvidados* at the University of Arizona's Chican@/Latinx Cultural Center. The documentary has been confirmed as part of the Bicultural Studies Program at the University of Texas, San Antonio this September.



K. Ryan Proctor, Ph.D., associate professor of sociology and criminology, will publish his first book, *Mechanistic Criminology* on June 7 with co-writer, Richard E. Niemeyer. The book, published by Routledge, details the challenge criminologists face due to antiquated theoretical methods and how incorporating modern scientific advances could allow for a revolution that other sciences have experienced.



Matt Schwader Harbor, MFA, assistant professor of theatre and director of performance studies, is cast as William Shakespeare in the Heart of America Shakespeare Festival's production of *Shakespeare in Love*. The show will run from June 11 to July 7 in Kansas City.



Jordan Wagge, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology, authored two recent publications in the journals *Frontiers in Psychology* and *Collabra: Psychology*. She is also scheduled to speak as part of two panels on open science and best research practices at the 91st Annual Conference of the Midwestern Psychological Association this summer in Chicago. Wagge was named 2019 Professor of the Year by the Avila student body. 🏆



Excellence on Display at Student Scholar Day

At the 2019 Student Scholar Day, 20 students shared their scholarly work through oral, performance and poster presentations. The top five presentations were recognized with a monetary prize of \$300, and the runners up received \$150. Assistant professor of history Kelly Watson, Ph.D., provided the keynote address, "'Things Which Seame Incredible': Cannibalism in Jamestown, 1609-1610." 🏆



After a day of oral, performance and poster presentations, six Avila seniors were recognized for their hard work in the classroom at 2019 Student Scholar Day. Presentations included the chemical structure of various coffee preparations, the role of race and gender in knowledge attribution, among others.

Kinesiology Masters Program Lifts Off

Building on

a highly regarded undergraduate program, Avila's Kinesiology program added a Master of Science degree path during fall 2018, and is already exceeding expectations.

"Our five-year job placement analysis shows 89 percent of Avila Kinesiology graduates have been accepted to graduate school or already have a job at the time of graduation," said Gerald Larson, Ph.D., associate professor and program director of kinesiology. "By offering our undergraduate students an accelerated option to pursue their master's degree at Avila, we're preparing them with the knowledge and skills they need to advance their careers beyond typical entry level jobs."

The master's program has already begun to attract top students graduating from institutions throughout the region. They have been drawn to the professional experience of Avila's professors, and their hands-on teaching approach.

"I am very encouraged by the quality of students we're attracting for the master's degree," Larson said. "Our students are able to learn from professors who not only have a Ph.D. in their field, but also have professional experience outside of higher education. That's not something you will get at a larger school."

Students in the program also receive training in business development. An increase in the number of jobs requiring an advanced degree in kinesiology means students receiving a degree from Avila have even more opportunities for professional success. Larson



Gerald Larson, Ph.D., guides a student through exercises during coursework for the kinesiology master's program.

said kinesiology faculty help personalize each student's experience by helping them align their personal and professional goals with the curriculum, including internship and research opportunities.

"We try to meet them where they're at and identify the next steps they need to take, depending on what they want," he said. "Part of the reason we're teaching them about business development is that small business is a huge growth sector in Missouri right now. In addition, with an aging population there is growing need for movement professionals – for example, corrective exercise specialists – to bridge the gap between physical therapy or chiropractic treatment and healthy living. A degree in kinesiology gets program graduates into those positions, and making a living doing something they love." 📺



[Avila] students are able to learn from professors who not only have a Ph.D. in their field, but also have professional experience outside of higher education. That's not something you will get at a larger school.

Gerald Larson, Ph.D., associate professor and program director of kinesiology

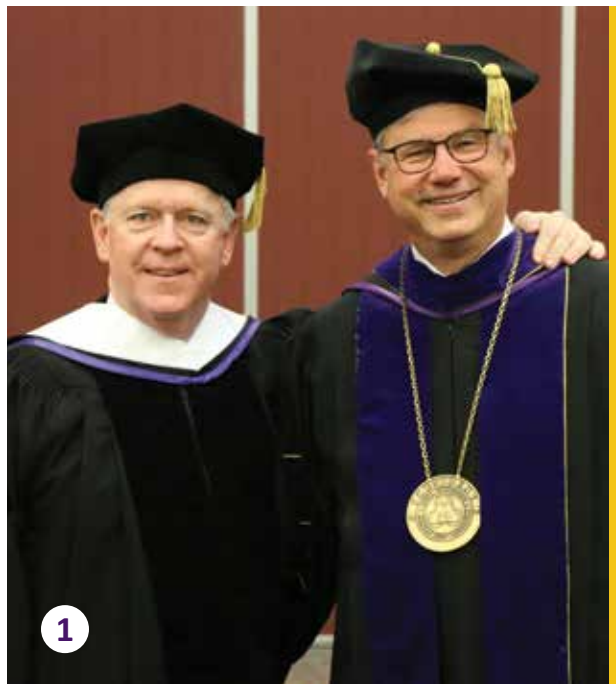
Events that Inspire

1. Mark Thompson, friend and trustee of Avila, received the honorary doctorate of humane letters at the 2019 commencement ceremony from President Ron Slepitz, Ph.D., CSJA. He is a long-serving member of the University's Board of Trustees, and served as co-chair of the Centennial Campaign, the largest fundraising campaign in Avila's history. His leadership and support have impacted thousands of Avila students through the Jeanne Collins Thompson '54 Endowed Scholarship, Jeanne Collins Thompson Hall, Jeanne Collins Thompson Ariston Award, and the statue of St. Teresa of Avila on campus, in memory of his parents, Byron and Jeanne Collins Thompson.

2. Avila University's Buchanan Initiative for Peace and Nonviolence hosted Mariam Fathalla and Amana ElAshkar, Palestinian refugees sharing their stories on their tour throughout North America this year. A standing-room only audience filled Thornhill Gallery on April 16 and heard about al-Nakba, "the catastrophe", when over 700,000 Palestinians were driven from their homeland by soldiers and militia men in the process of establishing the state of Israel in 1948. Mariam, now 89, was 18 years old when she was forced out of her home. The talk was one of many put on by the Buchanan Initiative, which promotes peace and the use of nonviolent action as a means to heal conflicts and make positive social change.


3. Avila's Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event went viral with more than 20,000 post shares on Facebook, reaching more than 1.7 million people around the world. The event drew awareness to sexual assault and gender violence in the community.

4. Children from the Avila community celebrated the Lenten season during the University's annual Easter egg hunt on April 16, searching for treats, decorating eggs, and posing with the Easter Bunny. 🐰





Serving the Dear Neighbor

Nearly 150 Avila faculty, staff, alumni, students, and friends banded together to serve the Kansas City community for Dear Neighbor Day on April 13. For the sixth year, the Avila family volunteered at 20 non-profit organizations across Kansas City, devoting more than 500 hours of community service work to organizations including the Don Bosco Center, Community LINC, Cultivate KC, and Alpha Montessori. 



Softball Streaks to Championship

2019 SEASON TEAM HIGHLIGHTS

(regular season only)

Record: 26-14 (20-4 in conference)

Home Runs: 30*

Triples: 18*

Stolen Bases: 100*

Runs Scored per Game: 5.55

KCAC Player of the Year: Mia Moreno, 1B,
sophomore

*Conference Leader

A record-setting season for the Avila University softball team culminated in a Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference championship, the team's first in more than two decades.

The Eagles swept the University of St. Mary to close the regular season on the road, earning the team (26-14 overall, 20-4 conference) a share of the title and a spot in the NAIA National Tournament.

The team's power hitting carried them throughout the regular season, including the sweep over St. Mary. Combining for a record 30 home runs during the season, the team finished with a bang, getting two blasts from sophomores Mia Moreno and Cierra McGee. Each finished with five for the year.

After finishing runner-up in the KCAC Tournament, the team's postseason run came to an end in the NAIA Opening Round in Dodge City, Kansas.

However, the season had one more moment to remember, as ESPN's Sportscenter named senior outfielder Kayla Robison's spectacular catch smashing through the outfield wall its top play of the day. 🏆

Thames Earns All-American Spot

In a season packed with record-setting performances, senior Helen Thames saved her best performance for the NAIA Indoor Track and Field National Championships earlier this spring. She took fifth place in the 400-meter dash, earning NAIA All-American honors, and setting a school record in the event along the way.

Thames was one of several Eagles who went to the national meet. Thames was also part of the women's 4x400-meter relay team, joined by juniors Tenka Stringer and Breonne Maltbia, and sophomore Murielle Merce. Sophomore Shyrelle Yates competed in the triple jump, just missing out on a school record during the preliminaries. On the men's side, junior Josh Benford finished 12th in the high jump, clearing 2.02 meters. 🏆



Photo Credit: Courtesy of Kansas Wesleyan University Athletics

Cheadle, Moylan to Cheer On Chiefs

Look out for two Avila University alumnae on the sideline next season for the Kansas City Chiefs, as J'mia Cheadle '18, and Elizabeth Moylan '19 were named to the 2019 team's cheer squad this spring.

Cheadle and Moylan were selected after a three-day tryout camp featuring nearly 250 participants. The tryout process included group and solo performances, skill assessments and interviews, as well as a written test covering the history of the Kansas City Chiefs and general football knowledge.

Both Cheadle and Moylan were members of Avila's Glitter Girls Dance team, for four and two years, respectively. They are among nine first-time selections to the 34-member squad.

"I could not be prouder of J'mia and Elizabeth on being chosen to be a part of the 2019 Chiefs Cheerleaders Organization," said Cynthia Freeman, Avila Glitter Girls head coach. "They are both amazing women who will be astounding role models for young girls and women in the Kansas City area. I know they will be incredible representatives of both AU Nation and the Chiefs Kingdom." 🏆



Check out your Eagles on Avila's Athletics website at AvilaAthletics.com.



Avila University's 43rd annual

Steer Dinner



Building on Our Promise





Steer Dinner & Auction

February 2, 2019



Avila University raised more than \$1.07 million for student scholarships at the 43rd annual Steer Dinner & Auction. Highlights included performances from the University Singers, toasting Dr. Larry Garrison Sullivan, and dancing at the After Party. This year's Steer Dinner was led by Honorary Chairs Rodd and Martha '66 Staker, and Event Chairs Kevin and Tricia '00 Lyon. More than 660 guests and volunteers attended the event on February 2, 2019, at the Kansas City Marriott Downtown in the Muehlebach Tower. View more Steer photos at Avila.edu/Steer.



Left page, left to right: Kate Thompson Brown and Betsy Guastello of presenting sponsor Country Club Bank; Honorary Chairs Rodd & Martha '66 Staker, President Ron Slepitz, Ph.D., CSJA, Suzanne Slepitz, Event Chairs Kevin and Tricia '00 Lyon; Student speaker Chelsea Espino; Joseph and Susan Fahey with the University Singers; **right page, top to bottom, left to right:** J'mia Cheadle '18 and Roshonda Davis-Cheadle '91; back row: Marie Joan Harris, CSJ, Ph.D., Ruth Stuckel, CSJ, Ph.D., Nicole Nicoll, CSJA, Helen Alder, CSJ, Laverne Aufmuth, CSJ, front row: Helen Flemington, CSJ, Rosemary Flanigan, CSJ, Ph.D. '47, and Paddy Lorenz, CSJ, Ph.D.; Lisa and Vercie Lark; Tom and Marcia '73 Walsh with Mary Ellen '73 and Dan Clark

2019 Jeanne Collins Thompson '54 Ariston Award: Lauren Highfill '19, Nursing



Each year, Avila recognizes one outstanding member of the senior class who best represents the mission, value and charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. The Ariston Award is named after 1954 alumna Jeanne Collins Thompson. This year's recipient, Lauren Highfill – a nursing major from Jefferson City, Missouri – was recognized at a luncheon on May 3 with President Ron Slepitz, Ph.D., CSJA. After graduation, Highfill will begin her career as a registered nurse with a surgical care unit at St. Luke's South Hospital in Overland Park, Kansas. 🏆

EAGLESconnect Networking Series

Avila's Alumni Association introduced a new networking series on March 28: Eagles Connect. Eagles Connect offers an opportunity for Avila alumni to connect with one another in alumni-owned or alumni-run businesses around Kansas City.

Nick Ward-Bopp '09 and Catherine (Turner) Ward-Bopp '14 were the first Eagles Connect hosts at Maker Village KC. Nick and friend, Sam Green, started Maker Village KC in 2014, a community wood and metal shop in Midtown Kansas City.

If you are interested in hosting a future Eagles Connect to show off your space to fellow alumni, contact the alumni office at alumni@avila.edu or 816.501.3780. 🏆



2018 Alumni Survey Highlights

🏆 95%

strongly agreed or agreed they were satisfied with their overall education at Avila.

🏆 91%

strongly agreed or agreed that Avila has prepared them to succeed in their career.

🏆 JOINING A BOARD OR MENTORING A STUDENT

were the top two choices for alumni volunteer opportunities. If you are interested in joining a University board or mentoring an undergraduate student or recent alumnus, contact the alumni office at alumni@avila.edu.

🏆 TOP THREE EVENTS

you would like to attend: alumni gatherings in your area, class reunions and professional development opportunities.

Watch your email and the Alumni Facebook page for upcoming events and opportunities!

Do you have more feedback on your experience as a student or as an alumnus? Please email your comments to alumni@avila.edu or call 816.501.3780.

Nick Ward-Bopp '09 (right) speaks with alumnus Leonard Casey, Jr. '07 (left) and his wife Tamara during the inaugural Eagles Connect alumni networking event.

CLASS NOTES

'66 MARTHA (LEAHY) STAKER and husband, Rodd, served as the honorary chairs for the 2019 Steer Dinner & Auction.

'67 S. ANDREA KANTNER, founder of the Franciscan Mission Warehouse in Independence, Missouri, is one of two recipients of the prestigious International Peace Award from the Community of Christ. Since 1993, the Community of Christ International Peace Award has been given to people and organizations that exemplify the church's call to be peacemakers.

'75 ELAINE (WILLIAMS) DOMIAN, PH.D., recently retired from KU School of Nursing.

'76 RUTH JUAREZ recently retired as the director of Nursing and Allied Health at the University of Missouri-Columbia. She now works part-time at the University of Missouri Sinclair School of Nursing assisting with a grant focused on long-term care.

'78 VICKI (FRANK) HICKS retired in January after serving as a KU School of Nursing faculty member since 1992.

'86 GARY BLOOMFIELD worked in government public affairs for more than 20 years, until he retired to write full-time. This year, he has a book on the Korean DMZ,

titled "The Devil's Playground," and a book on military doctors and nurses, titled "The One." Future projects include a biography on George Custer, and an update of the WWII entertainers book.

'88 ROB SCOLES recently appeared in the play, "The Hollow" by Agatha Christie with City Theatre of Independence.

'88 DEBORAH (AMOS) WELHOFF recently joined the Awards & Recognition Committee of the Alumni Board.

'95 BRUCE JOHNSON was named the new crisis stabilization manager for Pawnee Mental Health Services.

'95 KRISTI LITTLETON was named Professor Emerita at Avila University. She was an assistant professor of radiologic science.

'96 AD GLADU has been hired as a creative writer for one of the world's leading design firms, PGAV, in St. Louis.

'97 DANA (CAHILL) ADLER recently became an instructor in Avila's Radiologic Science department.

'97 JOHN L. KOPECKY moved back to the Kansas City area and accepted a job with CFO Systems.

'97, '02 LINDA WIERSMA is retiring after 22 years working at Sunflower Elementary in Paola, Kansas.

'00 TRICIA LYON and husband, Kevin, served as event chairs for the 2019 Steer Dinner & Auction.

'00, '05 TERRELL TIGNER was recently promoted to dean of Student Services at Maple Woods Community College.

'01 SAYRA PLAYER BRODIE was in an episode of Law & Order, SVU in February.

'04 ANGELA CERVANTES ANTEQUERA recently released her newest middle-grade novel, *Lety Out Loud*. Angela Cervantes is the author of several beloved contemporary middle-grade novels including *Gaby, Lost and Found*; *Allie, First at Last*; *Me, Frida and the Secret of the Peacock Ring* and *Coco* the junior novel that accompanied the 2017 blockbuster Disney/Pixar movie.

'06 TARA (CONDON) DEPOND recently got a job with Blue Label Digital Printing in Lancaster, Ohio. She also recently welcomed a new baby.

'07 KIM BASNIGHT recently accepted an account manager position with Rotech Healthcare. Basnight lives in Tennessee.

'07, '15 KYLE KELSAY recently accepted a new role as internal auditor at Forrest T. Jones & Company in Kansas City, Missouri.

'08 TERESA (DIEBAL) LODEN and husband, **JASON LODEN '08**, welcomed their first son, Isaiah Owen, on December 12, 2018. (pictured, left)



CLASS NOTES

'09 BRYONNE CUMMINGS recently joined the Events Committee of the Alumni Board.

'10 JENNIFER (SOSNA) GARCIA and husband **JESSE GARCIA '09** welcomed their second child, Grayson Jay, on February 19, 2019. He joins big sister, Brooklyn. (pictured, right)

'10 JACQUELINE (SHARP) HATFIELD and husband, Michael, welcomed their second child, Emily Sue, on February 12, 2019. (pictured, right)

'11, '12 LARRY HAYES was recently promoted to director of Public and Indian Housing for HUD. He is one of 45 directors across the country, and will continue serving the Florida region.

'12 TYLER CARDWELL and wife, Jami, welcomed their first daughter, Harper Kay, on March 1, 2019. (pictured, right)

'12 AMY (RICHARDSON) CORKEN welcomed a child on December 10, 2018.

'14 MELISSA (SEABAUGH) DOUTHIT married Clark Douthit on October 19, 2018, in Fredericktown, Missouri. Melissa and Clark met at Washburn University School of Law.

'15 ELISE CRETEL graduated with a master's degree from the University of Saint Mary in 2017. She is currently working in a nuclear engineering department with Huntington Ingalls Industries in Virginia.

'16 BRANDON CALLOWAY recently accepted a position at United Way of Greater Kansas City as the volunteer engagement manager.

'16 WILL ENNIS was recently hired as a full-time firefighter with the Shawnee Kansas Fire Department.

'16 JENNA (RANGEL) KOERNER recently graduated with her second bachelor's degree in nursing from Mid-America Nazarene University.

'16, '18 BEN WALKER recently started a career as a talent acquisition partner at the University of Kansas Health System.

'16 ELISE PATES married **NIC YONTER '16** on December 15, 2018. (pictured on the Avila Quad, right)

'16 DIANA HENRICKS is wrapping up her second year as a Teach for America corps member. She teaches English language arts and reading intervention in Tulsa, Oklahoma. This past year she led a choir, tutored and mentored first-year teachers.

'17 SHONTEL WALKER recently accepted the position outpatient counselor with Mirror Inc. in Kansas City, Kansas. Mirror is a nonprofit organization providing behavioral healthcare, prevention and wellness, and correctional re-entry services.



'09, '10 GARCIA



'10 HATFIELD



'12 CARDWELL



'16 PATES / YONTER

'18 J'MIA CHEADLE was named to the 2019 Kansas City Chiefs cheerleaders roster.

'18 ANNIE CRONENWETT recently accepted the position of outpatient therapist with KVC Health Systems. KVC is a private, nonprofit child welfare and behavioral healthcare organization.

'18 ERIC GREEN recently became a career consultant and adjunct professor with the University of Texas at Dallas. He also welcomed a baby in April.

'18 ALLIE MARQUIS recently accepted the position of outpatient counselor at Mirror Inc. in Kansas City, Kansas. Mirror is a nonprofit organization providing behavioral healthcare, prevention and wellness, and correctional re-entry services.

'18 TROY MCKERRELL recently joined the Ontario Fury, a Major Arena Soccer League (MASL) team. He recently relocated to southern California to become the CEP of Define Sports & Entertainment, which he co-founded.

'18 JESSICA NICKELS is now the marketing liaison and associate therapist at Resolve Counseling and Wellness.

'18 JESSICA OWENS passed her MRI boards.

'18 TERRY STANLEY was recently promoted to Provisionally Licensed Therapist at the Center for Healing and Recovery after completing his master's degree in psychology.

Stay Connected

We want to hear from you! Job promotion, new baby, recent travels or new home? Let us know so we can share your good news! Email your news to alumni@avila.edu or complete the What's New With You form at [Avila.edu/Alumni](https://www.avila.edu/Alumni).



Alumni Association



In Memoriam

To make a gift in memory of a friend or loved one, please visit Avila.edu/Donate or call 816.501.3602.

'47 **GERALDINE R. SULZER** of Overland Park, Kansas, passed away on October 30, 2018. Sulzer received her bachelor's degree in mathematics from the College of St. Teresa in 1947.

'54 **JANET M. LINCK** of Olathe, Kansas, passed away on December 13, 2018. Linck received her bachelor's degree in education from the College of St. Teresa in 1954.

'55 **JEAN (MCNAMARA) BRUCE** of Raytown, Missouri, passed away on December 7, 2018. Bruce received her diploma in nursing from the College of St. Teresa in 1955.

'57 **MAUREEN (WHITE) O'CONNOR** of Minneapolis, Minnesota, passed away on October 22, 2018. O'Connor received her bachelor's degree in biology from the College of St. Teresa in 1957.

'58 **MARGARET (PINKERTON) HEMBREE** of Kansas City, Missouri, passed away on March 8, 2019. Hembree received her bachelor's degree in education from the College of St. Teresa in 1958.

'74 **LAURA (RICHTER) MCCLAY** of Severna Park, Maryland, passed away on October 31, 2018. McClay received her bachelor's degree in nursing from Avila College in 1974.

'75 **NANCY BARR** of Kansas City, Missouri, passed away on March 22, 2019. Barr received her bachelor's degree in nursing from Avila College in 1975.

'76 **LLOYD P. KEMP** of Kansas City, Missouri, passed away on March 6, 2019. Kemp received his bachelor's degree in elementary education from Avila College in 1976.

'95 **OLIVIA (MCFALLS) WATSON** of Lee's Summit, Missouri, passed away on March 9, 2019. Watson received her M.B.A. in accounting from Avila College in 1995.

ROBERT A. CUNNINGHAM of Shawnee Mission, Kansas, passed away on November 7, 2018. Cunningham was a longtime supporter of Avila University and a member of Avila's Heritage Society.

DOUG D. POYSER, of Overland Park, Kansas, passed away on March 8, 2019. Poyser was a longtime supporter of Avila University, and attended several Steer Dinner & Auctions over the years.

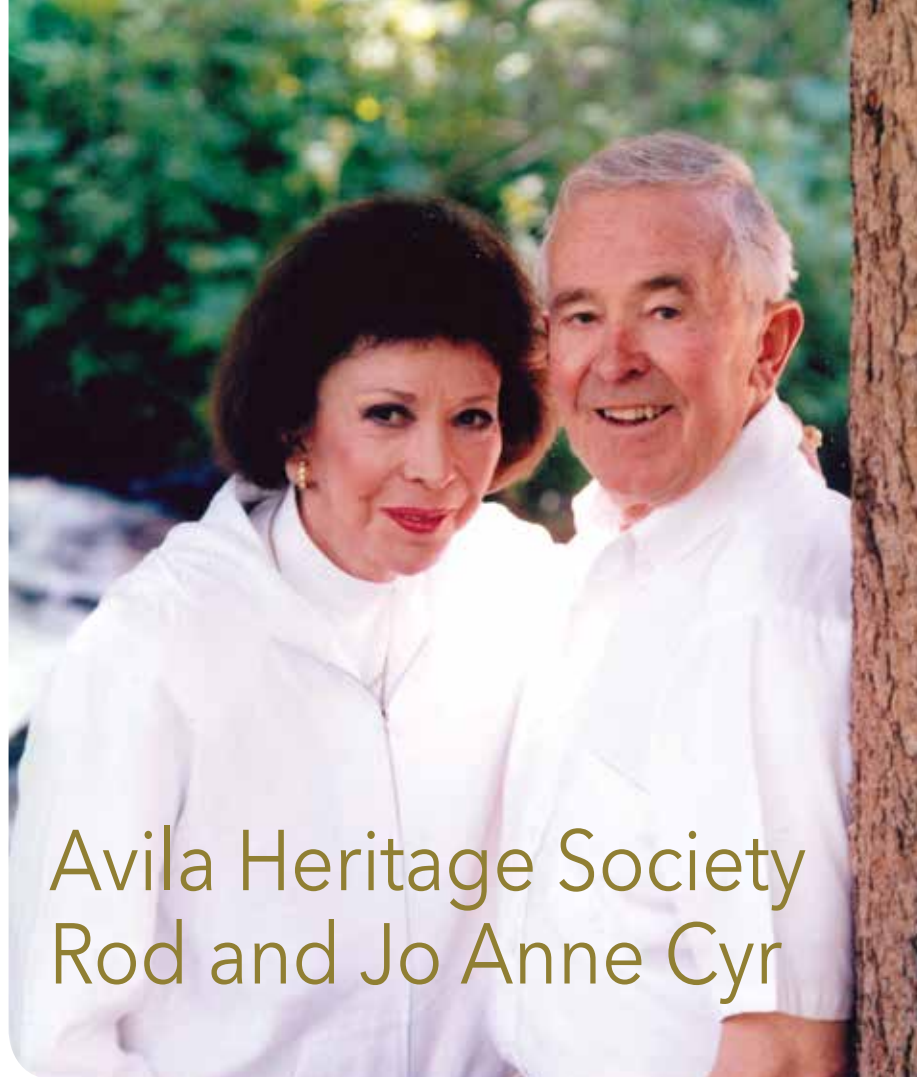
RUTH I. SPERRY, of Westwood, Kansas, passed away on November 24, 2019. Sperry was a good friend of S. Olive Louis Dallavis, and longtime supporter of Avila University.



'49, '15 (HON.) **S. ROBERTA SCHMIDT, CSJ** passed away on January 2, 2019. She received her bachelors in philosophy in 1949 from the College of St. Teresa and served as an Avila trustee. She is remembered as an educator, healer, activist and mentor. Sister Roberta devoted herself to education and service to the community as a teacher and superintendent in K-12 Catholic schools, a University professor and President of Fontbonne University in St. Louis, Mo. She will also be remembered as one of the original Sisters of Selma, as she participated in public demonstrations and marches in Selma, Alabama in 1965 to protest the lack of voting rights for African Americans. She received an honorary doctorate degree from Avila in 2015.



'77 (HON.) **HENRY W. BLOCH** passed away on April 23, 2019. Henry had a deep and rich history with Avila University. Henry received an honorary doctorate degree from Avila in 1977, for his professional and personal achievements in business and philanthropy. Henry served as Honorary Chair of Avila's Centennial Campaign. Through the H & R Bloch Foundation, the Marion & Henry Bloch Family Foundation and personally, Henry and his wife, Marion, established an endowed scholarship and supported capital improvements and programs. Henry and Marion were close friends with Avila President Emeritus, Sister Olive Louise Dallavis. Henry and other Kansas City business associates purchased Jimmy C., the steer who "inspired" the first-ever Avila Steer Dinner & Auction.



Avila Heritage Society Rod and Jo Anne Cyr

Growing up down the road from Avila University, Cathy Cyr Nigro witnessed the evolution of the school since it relocated to its South Kansas City campus.

“As a young girl, I went to school just up the hill from Avila, and you couldn’t leave without going by Avila,” she said. “Avila has been in my memory as far back as I can remember. We’ve seen it develop, grow and adapt to the community.”

Devout Catholics, her parents Rod and Jo Anne Cyr imparted the importance of compassion, education and family to Cathy and her sister, Suzie. In that spirit, Rod and Jo Anne established the Roderick J. & Jo Anne Cyr Foundation to support causes related to education, and children and elderly welfare.

“We are looking for those organizations where you can tell the people have told themselves, ‘I’m going to devote my life to this,’” said Chris Nigro, Cathy’s son. “You know when you’re giving to those organizations it could have a transformative effect on the

organization and those they serve. Avila has that level of passion in their service.”

Cathy and Suzie came to understand the importance of continuing their parents’ legacy of being a good neighbor to the Kansas City community, through philanthropy as well as a way for it to continue in future generations.

“I didn’t realize it at the time my dad created the foundation, but I think his purpose was to keep us together and establish something with his values that would require we all work together,” Cathy said. “I think the emphasis on family is part of his legacy with the foundation; he created it in a way where we are obligated to rely on one another as a family and we all work together.”

When it came time for the Cyr Foundation to continue to support excellence in education, they looked to the family’s long-time neighbor, Avila. The Foundation established the Cyr Family Endowed Scholarship in 2015, providing aid to an at-need, full-time student who excels in the classroom and embodies the

values of the Cyr Family. With the scholarship, the family entered the University’s Heritage Society. In addition, the Foundation has been a key donor to establish the Goppert Performing Arts Center, as well as annual scholarships, Steer Dinner and a program called the Quality Initiative, which provided targeted retention efforts for at-risk students.

“It’s important for us to affiliate the Roderick and Jo Anne Cyr Foundation with the highest caliber of education” Cathy said. “Everything about Avila is outstanding, and I’m proud to say we can be a part of it. Because of the attitude of excellence that is here, it seemed such a natural fit that Avila would be part of our philanthropy.”

We invite you to join the hundreds of friends and alumni, just like Rod and Jo Anne Cyr, who have already planned their legacy at Avila. Making a planned gift to Avila can be done in several simple and savvy ways without reducing your income or diminishing your savings.

Call us today to learn more and to make a lasting impact. Contact JT Cattle, director of development, at 816.501.3696 or JT.Cattle@avila.edu.



**We
Are
Family**

HOMECOMING WEEKEND 2019: OCTOBER 3-6

 Save the date and plan on returning to campus for a fun-filled Homecoming Weekend! Activities include the Heritage Day Luncheon, Athletics Hall of Fame induction, Dinner Theatre, Alumni Awards presentations, class reunions, theatre performances and athletics games.

All alumni and friends are welcome! A full schedule for the weekend and registration can be found at Avila.edu/Homecoming.

